



# SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

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Monthly in print, daily on the web - [www.swindon-business.net](http://www.swindon-business.net)

**Lucille wins PA  
of the Year**

**See backpage**

## On the road to success

Swindon's motor industry in the driving seat for innovation

**Pages 8&9**

**Coming next month  
The ultimate guide to  
green business**

## Govt signal go-ahead for direct Heathrow rail link

The Government's pledge to contribute £500m to the much-needed direct rail link from Swindon to Heathrow Airport has been welcomed by business leaders in the town.

The commitment, which came from Transport Secretary Justine Greening as part of a new draft aviation policy framework, could now mean building the long-awaited spur line into the airport will go ahead.

As a result, rail journey times from Swindon to Heathrow – one of the world's busiest airports – could be cut by 30 minutes, a significant boost for the town's exporters and a major incentive for overseas businesses to head to the region.

Coupled with the signalling upgrade at Reading Station, which is easing bottlenecks into London, electrification of the Great Western mainline through Swindon Station and the re-doubling of the Swindon-Kemble line, the move will usher in a new era for the town's vital rail links.

At present, rail travellers to Heathrow have to go to Paddington and take the Heathrow Express back out to the airport, or change at Reading and take a bus.

The Great Western mainline to London runs close to Heathrow, and a freight only line from it goes almost to the airport's perimeter – yet until now a direct link into the airport had always been a remote possibility.

Director of GWE The Initiative in Swindon & Wiltshire Ian Larrard said: "We welcome the Government's announcement to invest in the



Heathrow spur link as a crucial investment which will help give the region's economy a global boost.

"Provision of this easier, faster route is essential for existing businesses and also for inward investment.

"Businesses west of Heathrow have been calling for this vital investment for many years.

"We are hopeful that this investment marks a significant change in the delivery of quality transport infrastructure to the region which is long overdue.

"For too long large towns and cities west of London have suffered from a lack of investment in key pieces of infrastructure.

"However, we can look forward to the roll out of a rail network fit for the 21st century."

Swindon Chamber of Commerce

president/lead ambassador Heydar Faramarzi called the decision excellent news for the town's businesses, adding: "International connectivity and access to emerging markets is essential for UK economic prosperity."

First Great Western managing director Mark Hopwood also welcomed the decision.

The company has been lobbying businesses to support the spur as part of its submission to retain the Greater Western rail franchise which is up for renewal.

"In speaking to the business communities across our region, they really value the economic benefits improved rail access to Heathrow could bring," he said. "I'm pleased we've been able to work with them and industry partners to move the debate forward to this stage."

## Encouraging signs from Market Monitor

Encouraging signs in the office and retail sectors are buoying the commercial property market, although a rather bleaker picture is in store for the industrial sector, according to the first mid-year Market Monitor Update from commercial property consultants Alder King.

The report takes the pulse of the market in the South West, including Swindon, and South Wales at the midway point of what is shaping up to be a pivotal year for the market.

It shows that in Swindon the majority of office

transactions are taking place out of town, with the largest so far this year at Delta 1200 on the Delta Business Park, where online conveyancing services group TM Group has taken the 10,405 sq ft first floor.

Activity in the industrial market slowed dramatically in the second quarter, tumbling from 1,823,000 sq ft in the equivalent period last year to just 467,000 sq ft. See next month's Swindon Business News for a full report on the Alder King's Market Monitor Update. The report is available to download from [www.alderking.com](http://www.alderking.com).

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## People

Accountancy firm PwC has continued to invest in the region with the appointment of three directors, eight senior managers and 15 managers. The three director promotions are made from the firm's assurance, deals and consulting practices. In assurance, **Stephen Patey**, who celebrates his 20th anniversary with PwC later this year, will to continue to service both private and public sector organisations. He will take on an important role providing support to entrepreneurial companies and private businesses in the region. **Matthew Bambery** becomes a director in deals (transaction services). Matthew has worked in the West & Wales practice for six years and has led a number of financial due diligence assignments, working with both corporates and financial buyers across a variety of sectors. **Ian Evans**, now a director in consulting, leads a series of high-profile transformation programmes across the region, predominantly with local government clients. He specialises in whole organisation transformational change including operating model design, process improvement and performance management with a keen focus on making sure clients achieve the financial and non-financial benefits they are seeking.



Stephen Patey



Matthew Bambery

Wincanton, the Chippenham-based logistics and supply chain management group, has appointed **David Radcliffe** and **Martin Sawkins** as non-executive directors with effect from July 27. Mr Radcliffe is chief executive of corporate services group Hogg Robinson, a position he has held since 1997. Mr Sawkins is group human resources director of Rentokil Initial, having been appointed in 2008. He previously held similar roles at HomeServe, the AA and at Centrica Home and Road Services. Both will join the audit, remuneration and nomination committees. Mr Sawkins will also chair the remuneration committee. Meanwhile Neil England will retire as a non-executive director on July 31. Paul Venables will assume the role of senior independent non-executive director with

effect from August 1.

The Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) has appointed **Phil Jones** as head of supply chain development, to help manufacturers increase efficiency and growth throughout their supply chains. Based in the South West, Phil will be focused on looking for supply chain opportunities that will help both SMEs and large enterprises develop their businesses. He will work across all sectors but with a particular focus on targeting advanced manufacturers with high-growth potential, and helping them create a sustainable supply chain that will provide a solid base for future growth. Phil has a degree in mechanical & production engineering and a Six Sigma master black belt. Prior to joining MAS, he spent three years at Vestas Wind Systems, the world's largest producer of wind turbines, where he built and ran its aftermarket supply chain. Before this, Phil spent 16 years in the aerospace sector at General Electric and Honeywell Aerospace.



From left: James Phipps CEO of Excalibur Communications, Tom Bolt IT support analyst and Darren Beggan, head of professional services

**Tom Bolt** from Excalibur Communications, the Swindon-based IT and communication firm, is celebrating being shortlisted for the Microsoft Apprentice of the Year Award. Tom - the only entrant to be selected from the Swindon area - is proud to have been recognised by the world's largest software company even though he did not win the overall title. The awards, staged at a prestigious reception at the Houses of Parliament, recognised achievements in developing workplace skills and experience. Tom said: "I wholeheartedly recommend apprenticeship schemes as a way to gain valuable experience at a time when finding a route to work is incredibly

difficult for young people."

Technology specialist for the live event sector Etherlive has expanded its team with the appointment of account director **Dave Williams**. Dave brings almost two decades of experience in the IT and AV industry to the Chippenham-based firm. His past roles include senior new business development manager at Gordons AV/Hot AV Multimedia Services and Moonlite Productions. At Etherlive his responsibilities will be to manage existing accounts and initiate growth within the corporate conference sector. Dave will also build on Etherlive's relationships across UK venues and with agency bookers responsible for corporate conferences, events and product launches. Dave joins at a time when Etherlive's client roster is growing with high-profile events including Hop Farm, Cornbury and Green Man Festivals and the PSP Southampton Boat Show. Etherlive director Tom McInerney said: "I'm confident that Dave's knowledge of the sector and vast experience will prove to be an asset to our operation and put him in good stead to continue to drive high-profile contract wins for the business."



Dave Williams

**Tony Prestedge**, chief operating officer at Swindon-based Nationwide Building Society, has been appointed to the board of Opportunity Now, the gender equality in the workplace campaign from Business in the Community. As well as reflecting his board level experience and personal interest in the issue, his appointment also recognises Nationwide's support of the campaign. Founded in 1991, Opportunity Now works with more than 200 of the UK's most significant employers to accelerate change for women in the workplace. It works with its membership of employers, from private, public and education sectors, to offer tailored, practical and pragmatic advice on workplace issues and accelerating change for women in the workplace.

For more People stories  
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## 20:20 Dialogue wins contact centre industry award

Swindon-based contact centre outsourcer 20:20 Dialogue has won the Best Outsource Partnership Award at the 2012 South West Contact Centre Awards.

Now in their fourth year, the awards celebrate the multi-million pound industry which employs more than 52,000 people in the region.

20:20 Dialogue's 200-seat state-of-the-art contact centre in Arclite House, Peatmoor, provides inbound and outbound services to global brands, household names and small and medium-sized businesses. It has previously been finalist and winner at the National B2B Marketing and National Sales Awards.

Managing director Chris Hancock said: "This is the first time we've been recognised as a key player in the South West contact centre industry. We have successful long-term partnerships with many of our clients and tend to focus all of our energies on delivering a great service to their customers on a daily basis, so local businesses may not even be aware of us."

"However, this award is a great example of how our clients value the way we support their commercial objectives and help their business to grow. We're delighted to be recognised in this way, especially as our clients were included in the nomination process."

Although the award itself championed 20:20 Dialogue's partnership with car windscreen replacement firm Autoglass, the quality of the services it provides to other clients was also recognised on the evening. The company was nominated in the Best Support Team category for its work with car firm SEAT.

## BCS bursary won to promote computer science

Swindon-based Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) has been awarded a £1,000 BCS education bursary to promote the importance of computer science as an academic discipline. In total, £30,000 was awarded to 31 different educational institutions out of more than 200 which applied for funding for their computing-related projects.

EOTAS will use the funding from BCS, also based in Swindon, to deliver programming game workshops (based on Scratch) for its students aged 12-16 in conjunction with local app developers James and Mark Carroll of Evil Twin Artworks. EOTAS is a provision for pupils that are not attending mainstream school for various reasons.

# Major expansion is in store at Swindon's Designer Outlet centre

Plans have been drawn up for a £35m expansion of Swindon's Designer Outlet which will add 50,000 sq ft of new retail space and creating 350 jobs.

The project will regenerate the Grade II-listed Long Shop, built in 1874 as part of Swindon's Great Western Railway Works, creating up to 30 new retail units.

The development is part of a much larger master plan at the centre, which is managed by McArthurGlen, Europe's leading designer outlet group, and owned by Henderson Global Investors, as part of its UK Outlet Mall Fund, in which McArthurGlen is also an investor.

Brands will be grouped together

in special zones, such as premium/designer, high street and lifestyle, as well as a food quarter and restaurant units.

The new Long Shop area will include existing brands relocated from within the centre.

Swindon Designer Outlet manager Tina Cumpstey said: "The regeneration represents a significant investment to the centre and will breathe new life into the Long Shop."

"By bringing the centre into a new league of retail destination, this will attract more shoppers not only to Swindon Designer Outlet but also to Swindon."

The centre currently employs 750 people.



## Top business speaker lined up for key health at work event in October

Former British Chambers of Commerce director-general of the David Frost will be the keynote speaker at the 2012 conference of the Swindon Mindful Employer Network in October.

Mr Frost is now chairman of the National Network of Local Enterprise Partnerships and the co-author with Dame Carol Black of Health at Work - An Independent Review of Sickness Absence which was commissioned by Government last year.

At the conference he will speak about the review and giving some personal reflections on the importance of positive attitudes to mental health and well-being in the workplace.

Mr Frost, director-general of the British Chambers of Commerce from 2003 to 2011, said: "I am pleased to be invited to take part in the conference and very much support the values and principles of the Mindful Employer network which is supporting businesses and their staff up and down the country."

"The issue of well-being at work, sickness absence and leadership is gaining importance in these challenging times."

"I look forward to meeting Swindon businesses and working with Richmond Fellowship Wiltshire on the event."

The conference takes place between 11.30am and 2.45pm at the

Swindon Marriott on October 15 and is themed 'Leadership and Wellbeing'. Invitations will be circulated in the summer.

David Latham of Richmond Fellowship Wiltshire and who manages the Swindon Mindful Employer Network, said: "We are excited that David has agreed to speak at our fourth annual conference."

"He is an important representative of businesses in the UK and brings a wealth of experience in successful business leadership. I believe many organisations in the town will be eager to hear what he has to say." Swindon Marriott general manager Adam Flint

added: "We are delighted to support the conference this year, which we believe will be another highly successful and popular occasion."

"These events have grown in significance over the past four years and have gained an important status in the Swindon business calendar."

"We are particularly looking forward to hearing guest speaker David Frost who has made a major contribution to the issue of Leadership and Wellbeing in the workplace." For more information contact David Latham in 01793 433571 or email david.latham@richmondfellowship.org.uk



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## Museum of Computing gains national accreditation

Swindon's Museum of Computing has achieved full accreditation from the Arts Council England (ACE).

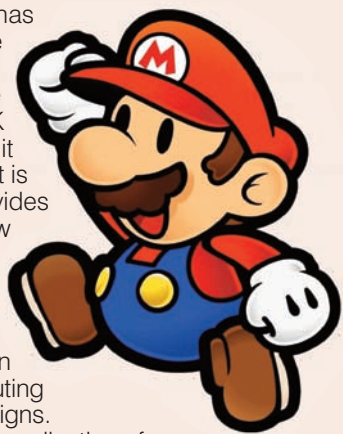
To meet the requirements, which are nationally-agreed standards for all UK museums, it had to demonstrate that it complies with standards relating to how it is governed and managed, how it provides services and facilities for visitors and how it cares for and manages its collections.

The accreditation emphasises that the local community has a remarkable archive on its doorstep while local, national and international visitors have an excellent insight into the history of computing - from the abacus to the most recent designs.

The museum, in Theatre Square, has a collection of more than 3,000 objects related to the history of computing from early computers to hand-held games consoles. It also holds regular exhibitions and events.

Curator Simon Webb said: "This is exciting and rewarding news. Accreditation is the culmination of years of work by our volunteers to bring the museum up to professional standards, and to ensure that we provide experiences for our visitors that are both enjoyable and educational."

Opened in 2003 by Swindon-based solicitor Jeremy Holt, a partner at law firm Clark Holt, it was the UK's first computer museum. It is a non-for-profit organisation run entirely by volunteers. The museum is open to the public on Fridays and Saturdays, and for group visits by arrangement.



## GWP refreshes contract with organic produce supplier

Cricklade-based GWP Packaging has renewed its contract with national organic food delivery company Abel & Cole to supply it with a range of bespoke packaging.

Under the three-year contract GWP will produce branded cardboard packaging, including beer packs, wine boxes, chill boxes, dividers, cartons and pallet board for Wimbledon-based Abel & Cole, ensuring its customers receive the products fresh and in the best condition possible.

GWP, which has worked with Abel & Cole since 2006, provides it with a specialist just-in-time delivery system that means it holds no packaging but receives deliveries precisely when it needs them. The system means GWP can accurately predict Abel & Cole's packaging needs up to four weeks in advance. Abel & Cole distributes to about 50,000 homes a week.

The firm's head of production Rob Grimmer said: "We collect and recycle packaging materials from our customers and it's not unusual for one of the boxes that GWP supplies to be used more than six times. This makes it very challenging both to get a box that is strong enough to last that many journeys and survive being filled with raw produce and being rained on, but also simply predicting what our usage of new boxes and therefore requirement will be."

"GWP provides us with a totally reliable service by making and holding a buffer stock and also by probably knowing more about our usage patterns than we do. We've recently completed a small redesign and full tender process and are delighted to be continuing with our well proven relationship with GWP."

GWP managing director Ruth Cook added: "We're very pleased to continue our relationship Abel & Cole. Due to the nature of their business, there are many demands placed on the packaging - it needs to be sturdy, able to cope in all weathers and reusable - and we are uniquely placed to offer this quality product as well as allowing them to take advantage of our just-in-time delivery system and reduce packaging storage costs."



## Firms develop their photography skills at Quicklearn trial event

A photography day staged by Swindon-based communications consultancy Quicklearn to provide businesses with bespoke pictures and avoid relying on stock images has been hailed a success.

Four companies took part in the trial event, which was led by Quicklearn managing director Charlotte Mannion and professional photographer Matt Miller.

The aim of the day, held at Basepoint serviced offices in Rivermead, was to bring together delegates from companies to take part in photoshoots for use on their own websites and in their marketing material.

They posed for shots which showed them in a range of business settings, including delivering presentations, chatting with customers and holding meetings.

Companies taking part in the Quicklearn sessions gets royalty-free use of the images. By bringing several businesses together to appear in each others' photos, the cost is just £99 for each company.

Charlotte said: "This photography pilot project is all to do with the communications process. We work with people, helping them to identify a communications strategy, of which photography is one area. Research shows that customers much prefer to



From left: Katie James of Quicklearn, Mike Morrison of RapidBI, Charlotte Mannion of Quicklearn, and Ant Hodge of HodgesNet.

deal with people they know and recognise. They are more likely to link with them if they see their faces on their website and in their marketing literature.

"We are very grateful to the four businesses which signed up and I believe they have found it very successful. It was great fun, with a lot of laughter and banter. Collaborating in this way also makes it affordable."

Mark Sansome, of training consultancy Red Penguin Solutions, said: "I took part because I didn't have any quality images on my website but had been relying on stock photographs, which don't really

convey the message I want to give my clients."

Ant Hodges, of online marketing company HodgesNet, said: "I take a lot of my own photos, but this is really useful as you get a third party looking in objectively."

Andy Entwistle, of Salient Sales & Training, added: "This came along at exactly the right time, as I am currently redoing my website, and wanted some new photographs which show what I do as a coach and a trainer." For more information visit [www.quicklearn.co.uk](http://www.quicklearn.co.uk), email: [charlotte@quicklearn.co.uk](mailto:charlotte@quicklearn.co.uk) or contact 07962 149074.

## Builders merchant takes off with Bristol Balloon Fiesta sponsorship

Builders merchant Kellaway Building Supplies has been chosen as sponsor of this year's Saturday Night Glow at the 34th Bristol International Balloon Fiesta.

The Bristol company, which has 10 branches including an outlet at Kembrey Park, Swindon, has been a supporter of the Fiesta for many years and a member of its 100 Club since 2009.

Each year premier sponsorships are put up for grabs and members of the 100 Club are entered into a draw for their chance to win one. At the recent draw dinner, Kellaway was randomly selected to sponsor the Saturday Night Glow on August 11th.

Chris Parker, sales development and marketing manager for Kellaway, said: "We are delighted to have the opportunity to support such an iconic event. It's our 30th anniversary this year, so we're really proud as a local



company to be associated with this local, yet prestigious, international event."

Bristol's Balloon Fiesta is the largest event of its kind in Europe and attracts 500,000 visitors each year, many of them from outside the city.

The spectacular nightglow has become one of the key events, featuring 30 or so balloons glowing in time to music followed by a fantastic firework finale.

The Balloon Fiesta takes place at Ashton Court from Thursday 9 to Sunday 12 August.

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# Read all about it: Smiths News wins prestigious West of England Business of the Year Award

Swindon-based newspaper, magazine and book distributor Smiths News has won the prestigious West of England Business of the Year Award – the region's most coveted business accolade.

The firm beat five rival businesses to claim the title in the category for companies turning over more than £25m a year or with 100-plus employees.

Collecting the award at a glittering ceremony in Bristol, Smiths News chief executive Mark Cashmore praised the firm's staff in its Swindon head office and its depots across the UK.

He said: "It is a great honour to be recognised for our progress and contribution to the region. The award is an accolade for the business and endorsement of the skill and dedication of our staff across the group."

Nick Morgan, a partner at awards hosts PwC and chair of the judges and for this category, said: "This year's competition proved fiercer than ever and the quality of all the finalists in this category proved that the West of England is home to some of the best businesses in the UK."

He said: "It is a great honour to be recognised for our progress and contribution to the region. The award is an accolade for the business and endorsement of the skill and dedication of our staff across the group."

"Smiths impressed the judging panel with their sustained profit growth, diversification of the business and the strength of its management and I was delighted to present them with the winner's trophy."

Smiths, formerly the distribution division of retailer WH Smith, has diversified over the past three years by acquiring book wholesaler, library and ebook supplier Bertams, Dawsons Group, which supplies newspapers to the airline industry, and mostly recently The Consortium, the Trowbridge-based distributor of educational and care products. Other finalists in this category



**Pictured:** Smiths News chief executive Mark Cashmore, centre, receives the Business of the Year Award from PwC regional chairman Rob Lewis, left, and chair of judges Nick Morgan.

were construction firm Beard, JB Global, the fast-growing oak furniture retailer – both based in Swindon – Cornish brewer St Austell Brewery Company and Swallowfield, the Somerset cosmetic, personal care and household goods manufacturer. Since their launch 24 years ago, the coveted awards, which this year were staged in association with Swindon Business News, have gained a reputation built firmly on the thoroughness of the judging panel, which is made up of respected business figures from across the region. Devon-based printed circuit board manufacturer Graphic received the award for companies with a turnover of less than £25m or fewer than 100 employees. Graphic triumphed in a four-way contest with Valldata Group, the Melksham-based outsourcing partner for the charity sector; Cut4Cloth, the Cornish-based maker of Frugi organic kids' clothes and piping systems manufacturer Pipex, based in Devon.

PwC partner Tracey Bentham, who chaired the judging panel for this category, said: "This was a strong year for this category and we

received a diverse array of applications from varying industries.

"The independent judging panel had a difficult task short-listing the finalists and an even more difficult task of selecting the winner.

"Graphic demonstrated to the judges, outstanding product innovation and an impressive business management strategy."

PwC regional chairman Rob Lewis added: "The quality of the winners and all of the finalists emphasises the standards that are being achieved by companies in the region. 2012's finalists ranged from FTSE and AIM-listed businesses to family and privately-owned businesses. Their ability to stay ahead in the current climate and the significant contribution they make to the economic success and its region is rightly celebrated."

The awards were sponsored by Beacon South West, Swindon Business News and its sister websites Bath Business News and Bristol Business News, the NSPCC and Western Daily Press.

Smiths News' total group revenues for the 44 weeks to July 7 increased by 3.3 per cent, boosted by contributions from the Dawson businesses it bought last August 2011 and its more recent acquisition The Consortium. In an interim management statement, the firm said:

- Revenues declined by 2.6 per cent and by 4.1 per cent on a like-for-like basis in the core Smiths News business. Cover price increases continued to support newspaper performance largely offsetting volume declines with magazine performance in line with expectation.

- Bertram revenues increased 32.5 per cent, including Dawson Books, and by 4.3 per cent on a like-for-like basis. Both UK wholesale and international traded marginally above last year with library services continuing to trade well above last year.

- Media and marketing revenues increased by 6.7 per cent on a total basis and 8.6 per cent on a like for like basis.

- The Consortium, the Trowbridge-based education equipment supplier, traded in line with management expectations with revenues for the 11 weeks since its acquisition 7.2 per cent above last year.

## Print management advice from Orchard Press

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And then comes the call. From the marketing department. They don't know how it happened, and they can't apologise enough, but nobody's actually ordered the print run. Your fabulously-crafted marketing material is nothing more than a couple of files on a computer. It's a scenario that is not as unusual as people may think. When someone's made a mistake like that, the post mortems can wait until later. What the customer needs is a print company that's able to take the problem off their hands and solve it, by getting their production schedule right back on track. Having print arrive too late can be hugely costly to a business that's planned a load of activity around a mailing going out at exactly the right time. At Orchard we had a case recently where a very

big client was moving into new retail premises and because the new build and move was so complicated everybody's attention was focused on that, rather than letting the customers know where to find them. I got the last-minute call saying they needed a massive mailout for Royal Mail, and I was able to calm the caller down and reassure her that with our hi-tech print equipment and the fact that we run 16 hours a day we could still turn the job around and get their print back in time to hit the deadline. Orchard Press's reputation for being responsive and reacting quickly is what makes customers stick with us once they've tried us.

We do pride ourselves on being at the cutting edge in terms of technology and quality, and yet we believe totally in giving what's now called 'old fashioned service'.

We know people are human, and even brilliantly slick organisations can have the odd oversight, and we see our role as being there to help them out of a hole. It makes us all feel really good when we can do that."

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## Local shopfitter listed among top international sellers

Wootton Bassett-based shopfitter and commercial interiors specialist Railston has been listed among UK companies with the fastest-growing international sales.

The firm appeared at number 21 in HSBC's International Track 200 league table which ranks private companies by their export growth.

Railston, which has been operating from Wootton Bassett for more than 25 years and provides shop-fitting services across the UK, Ireland and mainland Europe, achieved 101 per cent sales growth over two years, with international sales rising to £7.5m and total sales to £26.6m.

It was one of nine South West firms which have made a significant

contribution to the regional economy over the past two years, despite the downturn.

During this time these firms added 4,591 jobs and now employ a total of 31,490 people. Their combined sales are £1.8bn, and their international sales have grown by an average of 60 per cent a year over two years to a total of £725m.

HSBC head of corporate banking Ian Henley said: "It is a massive boost to confidence to see so many privately-owned British companies – including many which HSBC has helped to support – making such a positive contribution to the UK economy, despite tough trading conditions."



Help us celebrate 30 years in business

In October Swindon Business News will produce a special edition looking back at business in Swindon in 1982 and at the town's progress over the past three decades.

To take part in this unique supplement contact Anita Jaynes on 01793 615393 or email her at [anita@swindon-business.net](mailto:anita@swindon-business.net)





# Growth 'unlikely for many firms this year', gloomy survey warns

The West's mid-market businesses see no signs of the region's economy returning to growth this year, according to a downbeat new survey.

Also they do not believe that the funding environment will improve for at least another 18 months, further restraining growth.

The gloomy outlook emerges from the latest Mid-Market Business Survey carried out among £5m to £100m-turnover companies by accountants and business advisers Grant Thornton.

Exactly half of the managing directors and finance directors polled say a return to economic growth in the region is a year or more away, with a further 37 per cent believing it will be

six to 12 months before there is visible evidence of any upturn. However, 13 per cent were more optimistic, forecasting the appearance of growth within the next six months.

A solid majority – 58 per cent – do not foresee any easing of access to finance for businesses before 2014 at the earliest, although 37 per cent take the view that this will begin in the second half of 2013.

Likewise 34 per cent believe that ensuring a better flow of finance should be the top priority for the Government, with 26 per cent saying that delivering on its pledges to simplify the tax system and to create a more business-friendly tax regime should be top of the Coalition's business agenda.

A lack of bank finance was named by almost a fifth of companies when asked to identify the single biggest challenge to their business. Of greater concern was the ongoing effect of public spending cuts – highlighted by 50 per cent as impacting directly on their business and on customers.

However, despite these findings, 61 per cent expect their own business to grow over the next 12-18 months, mainly organically.

Another bright note is that 90 per cent agree that the West is generally "good for business," citing lower operating costs when compared to

London and the South East (46 per cent). The region's quality of life and sustainability credentials (both 27 per cent) were also identified as positives.

Grant Thornton's senior practice leader in the region, Nigel Morrison, said: "Our latest survey confirms that a sustained period of flat economic conditions is set to be the norm for some time to come, with the crisis in the eurozone continuing to have a negative impact on businesses in the West, particularly those which export to the worst affected countries."

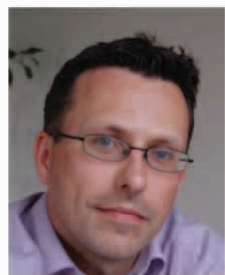
"Nonetheless we are working with plenty of dynamic companies which are delivering high growth in domestic and global markets, and this is also reflected in our findings."

# 37%

People who believe it will be at least another six months before an upturn

# 61%

Businesses expecting to grow in the next 12-18 months



## Ask Peter B

Small Business advice from Peter Bromiley ACA  
Technical Director, AMS Accountancy Ltd.

**Q: I have stopped trading and want to close down my Ltd. Company. Should I appoint a liquidator?**

**A:** If your Company has paid off its creditors, and has less than £25,000 in cash you could save liquidator's fees of over £5,000 by:

- Electing for it to be dissolved by applying to Companies House
- Ensuring all Company debts are paid
- Paying out the funds as a final Dividend or Capital, whichever is most tax efficient

**N.B. Dividends & Salary attract Income Tax, while Capital attracts Capital Gains Tax and is only applied to pay outs in excess of £10,600.**

If funds exceed £25,000 take advice from an accountant. (Distributing any part of the amount as Capital will result in the higher 'Dividends & Salary' tax being applied to the whole amount).

**Example:** Jim is a Higher Rate Taxpayer and has permanently ceased trading through his Ltd. Company and wants to take the remaining £20,000 out of the Company bank account. If he takes it as a final Dividend, he will pay Income Tax of £5,000 but by using s.1030A, he can pay it out as a Capital Distribution and the Capital Gains bill will be only £940. The Company can then be dissolved by Companies House.

**If you are looking for a good accountant you should contact us.**

AMS Accountancy Ltd  
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www.ams-accountancy.co.uk



# Farepak customers to receive final payments of half money owed

Customers of collapsed Swindon-based Christmas savings firm Farepak will eventually receive half the money they lost when the company failed.

The company collapsed in 2006, leaving 114,000 people with total losses of £37m.

Liquidators BDO have confirmed the final payments of 50 per cent of the money owed will be made by the end of August.

The Government's Insolvency Service had argued that the high-profile collapse of Farepak had been the fault of nine former directors of the company, but this action was dropped after a recent High Court case.

Farepak operated by collecting money from its customers on a monthly basis throughout the year. They could then use this to buy Christmas hampers or vouchers for use in stores such as Argos.

BDO has confirmed that a payment of about 32p in the pound will be made, which includes a share of the £8m from Lloyds Banking Group.

When added to the 17.5p in the pound given by the Farepak Response Fund charity, set up by the Government in 2006, customers will have received a total of approximately 50p in the pound, BDO said.

Former customers and agents who have changed their address since they made their original claim should inform the Farepak claims management team of the alteration.

Suzi Hall, who co-ordinated the Unfairpak campaign, said: "Never in



my wildest imagination did I think we would get back 50p in the pound. Unfairpak believe we have won."

She also praised the liquidators, who have waived some of their fees and been "very mindful" of costs.

"The demographic of Farepak savers is low-income women so this is absolutely wonderful," she said.

Business Secretary Vince Cable said he was "deeply disappointed" by the Insolvency Service's decision not to continue the case against the former directors, Stevan Fowler, Neil Gillis, Nicholas Gilodi-Johnson, Stephen Hicks, Michael Johns, Paul Munn, Joanne Ponting, William Rollason and Sir Clive Thompson.

The case was to prevent the ex-bosses of the Swindon-based firm becoming company directors.

# £60m Funding boost for local start-ups promised by Barclays

Barclays has announced additional funding of up to £60m for start-up firms in England over the next three years. This new funding is expected to support the creation of 4,200 new businesses, providing them with growth finance.

The funding from Barclays will support a new partnership between the bank, a consortium of enterprise agencies and the National Enterprise Network (NEN), which has secured an additional £15m from the Regional Growth Fund to support business growth on top of the £60m already being provided by Barclays.

Alongside the new start-up fund, the partnership between Barclays, NEN and the consortium will also deliver a programme of enterprise seminars in areas across the UK identified as having been particularly affected by the recession. It will provide the services and support to help aspiring entrepreneurs take their first steps in business. The £60m of new funding provided by Barclays is earmarked specifically for entrepreneurs who successfully complete the programme of training and have a viable business plan in place which has been endorsed by a dedicated business mentor.

It is estimated that this funding will enable Barclays to make up to

4,200 additional offers of finance to support the growth plans of new businesses, whilst the initiative as a whole will create 6,000 new businesses and 4,000 new jobs over a three year period. It is also expected that over 24,000 people will have the opportunity to attend the "Barclays Get Ready for Business" seminars.

Barclays' head of business banking in the South West, Darren Farnell, said: "The key danger point for a start-up business is the stage between setting up and getting finance.

"This is even more true when we are talking about businesses being set up in areas disproportionately hit by the recession. Start-ups in these areas often have it tough and they can struggle with low turnover and lack of core business skills, but they are also positioned where they can do the most good for employment and improving the local economy.

"With this funding we're looking to help new businesses that are hungry for success. They will go through a scheme that helps get them primed for growth, and then we will help the successful businesses with the finance that will help drive that growth.

"We fully back the goals of the Regional Growth Fund, and we are keen to build on that programme to really help business."



## EXPERTS

## How to get staff motivated using 'The Golden Rule'

Swindon-based Peter Mayes is a specialist executive coach who has worked with companies all over the world to enable them to get the most from their employees.

Here, in the latest of his exclusive articles for Swindon Business News, he sheds light on 'The Golden Rule'.

The philosophy which states you should treat others as you would like to be treated yourself – The Golden Rule – applies every bit as much in business and management as it does in any other walk of life.

It's widely accepted that unhappy or unmotivated staff only work at around 70 per cent and spend time avoiding work while happy staff not only give 100 per cent, they also actively seek to contribute more and suggest process improvements because they feel they will be taken seriously.

So what can you do to motivate your staff? Start by asking yourself what makes you happy because that will give you some insight into what makes your staff happy.

Generally speaking, what makes staff happy is:

- being listened to and heard
- being part of something
- having some freedom
- looking at our life as a whole
- having a sense of direction
- having a sense of ease

- knowing what we are good at
- getting recognition

Staff may be compliant at the moment due to the economic situation but in some cases that compliance is at least 30 per cent below their full capacity to help the business.

If you relate this to costs then the implications are massive. Where organisations have tried to command and control people, employees find even more innovative ways to avoid this over control. It is here that openness, trust and communication helps inform and understand.

So what makes staff unhappy?

- not being listened to and heard
- feeling isolated
- being over managed, micro managed or treated without respect
- keeping everything in boxes
- feeling lost
- having no confidence
- not knowing what we are good at
- being ignored

Treat your staff as you would like to be treated yourself and you will be well on the way to a happier and more motivated team.

Peter Mayes is an accredited coach with the Association for Coaching and a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development). To find out more about Peter and his work visit [www.petermayes.co.uk](http://www.petermayes.co.uk)

## Getting the business edge: IT simply applied

Ray Smyth of Swindon's The IPStore says, "There is a lot happening in your IT network and you need help to determine what might be business critical."

Once your business requires more than a few laptops and printers, you start to create an IT network infrastructure. There can be many elements and these will include familiar items such as Routers, Switches, Fire Walls, File Servers, Active Directory (AD), VM, Databases, Storage, SharePoint – the list is long. Each one of these devices will generate information about itself and this can be useful for IT managers and administrators. It can help them with device management, service configuration, and performance and error reporting; they are generally called (system) logs.

It is very easy to create a network with hundreds of elements, each independently producing data logs and in most cases it is only possible to view the log content manually. This is usually achieved by logging into each device and using a command line interface (CLI) which is not really for the average user as it may use programming language style commands. The information held in these logs can be quite critical; it may indicate an unauthorised access, accidental or deliberate configuration changes and reports that presage massive system down-time with evolving problems that can be extremely time-consuming to trace and resolve. The inadequate review of logs may conceal evidence of an advancing security compromise such as an APT

(Advanced Persistent Threat) which could wreak havoc on your organisation.

There is only one response to this challenge and that is a tool to automatically audit changes in all aspects of the IT infrastructure, and in real-time. Such a solution can report and alert (in real-time) against rules and exceptions, produce simple compliance reports and offer reliable forensic analysis. Such forensic analysis can be used to quickly locate a problem and aid a prosecution in the case of malfeasance. Some tools in this category will take snapshots of key system data at prescribed times. This can provide a very fast recovery to, for example, the total loss of all Active Directory settings and entries.

It would be wrong to think of such a software tool as a security device, however an IT Change Audit solution does sit as a sentinel and could prove to be very effective in managing data within the requirements of regulatory and legislative compliance. Some will think that IT Change Auditing is time-consuming, difficult and expensive – it isn't. A good solution can be up and running in hours without days of consultancy and once it is, your organisations head will be elevated away from the sand of your competitors and those that wish to do you harm.

**The IPStore is offering a free Business IT mentoring session for the first five qualifying SBN readers to apply. To find out more contact The IPStore at: [Advantage@TheIPStore](mailto:Advantage@TheIPStore).**

## Family of former Swindon rail worker wins asbestos claim

British Rail has paid £60,000 in compensation to the family of a former Swindon railway worker who died from asbestos-related cancer.

Philip Smith worked for British Rail for 26 years at its Swindon Works and for much of that period was continuously exposed to asbestos.

He worked in the AE shop, at one time the largest workshop in Europe, where his job was to plaster white asbestos over steam boilers. Many of his work colleagues have already died from asbestos-related illnesses.

Mr Smith died in November 2010.

His solicitor Brigitte Chandler, a leading industrial disease lawyer and partner with Swindon law firm Charles Lucas & Marshall and who has represented many hundreds of railway workers over the past 30 years, says Mr Smith became unwell two years before his death, which was caused by diffuse pleural thickening due to exposure to asbestos.

# 60 years

The amount of time it can take for signs of asbestos poisoning to show

"There are still many people in Swindon who worked in the railway industry who are being affected by asbestos exposure," she said. "On a more positive note, British Rail is now well aware of the problem and providing someone can show they worked there and were exposed to asbestos, many claims are now generally settled out of court."

BRB (Residuary) Limited, the company with responsibility for the British Rail works in Swindon, settled Mr Smith's claim out of court. Deaths from asbestos exposure are likely to peak over the next few years. Anyone suffering from chest problems who has been exposed to asbestos should seek medical advice.

"Unfortunately the area where Mr Smith worked was notorious for using large quantities of asbestos and there have been other deaths from employees working in the same area," added Ms Chandler.

"Claims against British Rail for asbestos exposure have been running for over 30 years. Even though the works were closed 25 years ago, cases are still arising because it can take up to 60 years for the illness to develop after exposure."

The Swindon and South West Asbestos Group is a regional charity which provides support groups and a free advice service to people suffering from asbestos disease and their families.

They now offer home visits to sufferers in the Swindon area to advise on benefits available.

For further details contact Swindon and South West Asbestos Group on 01793 532995, email: [info@asbestosgroup.co.uk](mailto:info@asbestosgroup.co.uk) or visit [www.asbestosgroup.co.uk](http://www.asbestosgroup.co.uk)

## Directors' Briefing

The legal landscape is constantly changing, sometimes making it difficult for directors to keep up with a seemingly endless stream of new rules and regulations. Here, solicitors from Withy King's commercial teams highlight a few recent developments and signal changes to be aware of over the coming months.

### Further changes to cookies compliance

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has published revised guidelines on the use of cookies. It has also set up a 'Report your cookie concerns' tool through which you can notify the ICO about potentially problematic websites. The latest guidelines, which replace the ones issued in December 2011, include a change in the ICO's position on the requirements for obtaining internet users' consent to the setting of cookies. It suggests that implied consent is an acceptable proposition in the context of storing or accessing information using cookies, at least where non-sensitive, personal data is concerned.

### What's the deal with Swaps?

If you have been involved in an interest rate Swap arrangement with your bank, you are probably aware that the main banks have now agreed to compensate customers who were mis-sold products. Compensation rates will vary from customer to customer and not all businesses will be offered money. Swaps will probably become the new 'PPI' issue so, if you have any concerns, it's worth getting advice sooner rather than later.

### Laws on asbestos tightened

The law's definition of who is responsible for managing asbestos risk in non-domestic premises is very broad. Landlords, tenants and managing agents are among those who could potentially be liable. All owners of non-domestic property are required to carry out a 'suitable and sufficient' assessment to determine whether asbestos, or material containing asbestos, is likely to be

present. As not complying with the legislation is a criminal offence and could result in a fine or imprisonment, it's highly advisable to have an asbestos survey carried out and to follow any recommendations made.

### Beecroft report may bring employment changes

The Beecroft report on employment law, now officially published after being leaked to the press last October, has received mixed reviews from employers and the legal community. The report suggests various measures aimed at stimulating employment and the economy, including further watering-down of the unfair dismissal protections, online checks for migrant workers and scrapping the new Agency Workers' rules. The Government has indicated that some of the proposals will not be implemented and consultation remains ongoing, but employers are advised to keep their eyes open for possible changes in the next 12 to 18 months.

### New Construction Act starts to bite

If you are carrying out construction work (or having it carried out for you) and it started after October 2011, then the chances are that the New Construction Act will apply to your work. Whether you are applying for payments, certifying them or being asked to make one, you need to understand the new rules. Did you know that if your employer now fails to confirm the amount due to you, you can step in and give a default notice? Or that if you don't want to pay the full amount of LADs (liquidated and ascertained damages) then you should probably be giving a Pay Less Notice? If you haven't checked your terms and conditions to make sure they comply then the bite is likely to be worse than the bark this time.



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# Made-in-Swindon Hondas boost sales drive

Honda's Swindon-built cars have helped the manufacturer strengthened its position in the UK corporate market. It achieved an 11 per cent year-on-year sales increase between January and June with a 26 per cent year-to-date increase in fleet performance.

This performance, which excludes rental and Motability sales, was been driven by particularly strong results in March (up 15 per cent on last year), April (up 55 per cent), May (up 94 per cent) and June (up 97 per cent).

Honda's new Civic is proving popular with corporate customers, it said. The ninth generation version has accounted for more than 4,000 sales so far this year – three times as many as the same time in 2011.

Honda (UK) manager – corporate operations Ed Hummel said: "Our customer base in the corporate sector has grown significantly this year, and the new Civic is proving to be a popular choice for company car drivers looking for a high-power, low-tax alternative to the more mainstream rivals."

Meanwhile Honda is confident the new CR-V, due to be launched in this autumn and with an expected reduction in CO2 emissions combined with its outstanding reliability record, will have the highest residual values and lowest SMR budgets in its class.

More than five million CR-Vs have been sold

globally since it was launched in 1995 and while the current, third generation model has been recognised as one of the most comfortable cars on the market, the new CR-V is set to enhance these exceptional comfort levels making it ideal for long business journeys, says Honda.

Around 6,000 CR-Vs are expected to be bought by corporate customers this year, with the new model accounting for 1,500 sales.

Honda says the introduction of its new Swindon-made 1.6 i-DTEC engine in the Civic early next year will be one of the most important new engine launches for Honda's fleet sales in recent history.

Boasting a best in class power and CO2 combination of 120 PS and 95g/km2, sales of 7,000 units are anticipated to corporate customers alone in a full year.

The new engine is the first drive train from Honda's new Earth Dreams Technology engine series to be introduced into Europe and the use of new high-strength material in the cylinder head has enabled Honda to create the world's lightest aluminium open-deck 1.6-litre diesel engine.

Honda says these lightweight characteristics, along with the compact high-efficiency turbocharger enhance responsiveness, will offer a class-leading balance of fuel economy and performance.



## Logistics industry gets stuck in the slow lane

Innovation is taking a back seat among West logistics firms as they focus on cost cutting and sticking to their core business, a new survey reveals.

However, they are feeling generally optimistic and most plan to invest over the next six months. Also further consolidation is likely in the sector as stronger businesses take advantage of market conditions and snap up weaker firms.

These themes emerge from the UK Logistics Confidence Index conducted by accountants Grant Thornton and Barclays.

When asked about the biggest issue facing them over the next half year, a third cite pressure on margins and a fifth fuel costs. Just 15 per cent said they were concerned by eurozone uncertainty.

Grant Thornton's regional corporate finance director Mark

Naughton said: "The logistics industry has always been an early indicator of the state of the wider economy."

"This sensitivity makes it wiser to the ways that it can thrive in the lean years. There is, however, only so far that costs can be taken out of a business, and margins cut, and only so many contracts that can be won."

"The next 12 months will likely be a period of consolidation in this sector, creating more companies of scale who are able to invest in innovation and diversification, as continuing to do more of the same is simply not an option. We also believe that the really successful companies will be operating on an 'asset-light' basis and co-ordinating the provision of services across the supply chain."

Although faced with cost pressures, there is optimism in the industry, the survey shows.

## Powerful deliveries for MAN Truck & Bus

Swindon-based truck firm MAN Truck & Bus has supplied electricity distributor Western Power Distribution with two new MAN TGM 18.250BB 4x4 rigid vehicles which it will use for general off-road maintenance work across the Midlands, South Wales and the South West. A third truck of the same specification is being built and will be delivered shortly.

The deal takes Western Power's MAN fleet to more than 40 4x4s including a number of vehicles it bought in 2003 and which are still providing reliable service. The firm recently trialled a TGM with an automated gearbox which lead to the acquisition of the latest TGMs.

Western Power fleet specifications engineer Paul Tucker said: "We were a little sceptical of an auto-box for off-road operation, but, the MAN TipMatic system has performed well and has helped to improve fuel consumption and



reduced operating costs. I don't think we will return to manual gearbox operation now."

Western Power Distribution's network has of 216,000 kms of overhead lines and underground cables, and 184,000 substations.

MAN Truck & Bus UK, based at Blagrove, is the British distribution company of German manufacturer MAN. Swindon is also the head office of MAN Finance UK.



Scan the QR code to watch the video now

## Innovation in IT and customer care behind TV vet's bid for perfect practice

Innovation is not something usually associated with pet care but TV vet Joe Inglis believes by bringing ground-breaking technology and a strong focus on customer care, his new Swindon practice will be a pioneer.

Joe, best known for his roles in Vets in Practice, The One Show and The Wright Stuff, will heading the Vet's Klinik Bridgmead practice and is employing a team of two veterinary experts and five staff who share his vision to work alongside him.

The state-of-the-art practice now under construction includes innovations such as a glass-fronted clinical area with a viewing gallery for owners, live internet streaming, online pet medical records and flexible online booking.

Joe believes this exciting new concept in animal care will far exceed anything done in the industry before and will transform the way vets work as well as improving pet owners' education, and end a culture that focuses too much on profits rather than pets.

So determined is he that this new idea will work that he has put his money where his mouth is and invested in the business, which opens in August. Total investment in Vet's Klinik, including from Joe's business partners, is £600,000.

Customer service will be key – along with smart use of technology – and Joe believes has looked closely at the models used by companies such as low-cost airline easyJet, which can offer highly-

discounted seats by harnessing the power of online booking software.

Vet's Klinik will be able to vary it's charges, offering cheap appointments outside busy hours and so smoothing out the traditional peaks and troughs of a vet's practice.

Joe, who qualified from Bristol Vet School in 1996, said: "I strongly believe that Vet's Klinik can bring significant and beneficial changes to the veterinary and pet care industry."

"When pet owners visit Vet's Klinik they can expect complete openness and honesty in everything we do, from treatments to pricing, as well as some amazing innovations that will massively improve the service we provide."

For example, pet owners will be able to book and pay for discounted appointments via the internet, view their pet's medical records online and keep up-to-date with their pet's treatments with our real-time, online updates. "We will also be hosting live internet streaming of treatments, case studies and Q&A sessions through our online Vet's Klinik TV channel. In short, by creating Vet's Klinik I am aiming to help and educate pet owners and provide a new transparent approach to top-quality pet care whilst making treatment much more affordable." The Klinik will be holding a public open day with plenty of activities and the chance to meet and talk with Joe and his team of veterinary experts.



# Hydrogen super-highway comes a step closer

Swindon strengthened its position as a centre for innovation in hydrogen-powered transport this month when the UK's first refuelling of a 700-bar hydrogen passenger vehicle took place in the town.

A Hyundai ix35 FCEV car was refuelled at the county's only public-access hydrogen refuelling station – on car maker Honda's giant assembly plant at South Marston.

On separate occasions over a two-day period, five kilograms of high-purity hydrogen were dispensed at a pressure of 700 bar in less than three minutes, the gas having been pre-cooled to minus-40°C.

The move, carried out in compliance with the industry's international operating standard, the SAE J2601 Protocol, is a significant step forward in the drive to prove that hydrogen can be a viable alternative clean fuel.

The filling station, the result of a partnership between industrial gases and engineering company BOC, a member of The Linde Group, Honda and Swindon's economic development company Forward Swindon, was officially opened last year amid much fanfare.

It is hoped it will be the first of a small national network of stations on key routes – in Swindon's case it would position the town as the key refueling spot along the M4 corridor, so making trips from London to the West Country and Wales possible in hydrogen-powered vehicles.



The Hyundai refueling took place away from any media attention – but the significance was not lost on those witnessing it.

Hyundai senior research engineer Soongil Kweon, who oversaw the refuelling on behalf of the car manufacturer, said: "The capability of the BOC station to refuel cars at both 350 and 700 bar pressures demonstrates that the UK is rapidly

increasing its credibility as a location for the roll-out of hydrogen-powered passenger cars."

All the major vehicle manufacturers have signed up to a global agreement to develop production lines for hydrogen vehicles by 2015. The standard specification for refuelling systems in these new models will be 700-bar pressure, so the Swindon station will

be able to service these vehicles as soon as they appear on Britain's roads.

BOC innovation manager for hydrogen systems Nick Rolf said: "This is the first refuelling of a 700-bar vehicle in Britain. As the only refuelling station in the UK currently capable of refuelling these vehicles, we are very pleased to welcome

Hyundai to Swindon. We hope that this visit will encourage other vehicle manufacturers to take the opportunity of bringing both 350 and 700-bar vehicles to the UK as well."

The station looks like a conventional filling station and the time taken to fill a vehicle is comparable with conventional fuels.

Forward Swindon chief executive Ian Piper said the refueling station position the town at the centre of a potential hydrogen superhighway. "The facility here in Swindon,

right in the heart of England, means that hydrogen-powered vehicles are able to reach other parts of the country easily," he said. "It is part of Swindon's vision to be in the centre of the UK's low-carbon economy."

Honda of the UK Manufacturing chief engineer Mike Godfrey added: "The hydrogen economy is developing rapidly as new vehicles and specifications are developed. But we need the refuelling infrastructure if hydrogen transport is to be a reality for everyone in the UK, and this refuelling station shows the way forward."

## Capacity to be expanded as Mini plant receives £250m boost

Swindon's Mini plant is to benefit from a £250m investment from German carmaker BMW.

The money will expand capacity at the plant, employing around 800 people, along with sister factories at Oxford and Hams Hall in the Midlands, by the end of 2015.

The Swindon plant builds most panels and some sub-assemblies for the Mini which are then taken to the main assembly plant at Oxford.

BMW said the investment would support its international growth strategy for the Mini, which will be expanded to include up to 10 different versions in the model range in the mid-term.

The Swindon plant, which opened in the 1950s as Pressed Steel making parts for a range of British carmakers, last year produced panels for 191,000 Minis.

BMW board member Harald Krueger said: "Over the last 11 years, Mini has been a unique global success and the BMW Group has even greater plans for the future



development of the brand. Plant Oxford has played a major role in this with cars being exported to over 100 countries around the world. This additional investment is great news for all our employees in the UK and shows the BMW Group's commitment to Britain as a vital manufacturing base for us."

Business secretary Vince Cable said: "BMW's ambitious

plans for Mini will ensure its UK sites at Oxford, Swindon and Hams Hall remain at the centre of Mini production worldwide. The investment of £250m in addition to the £500m last year demonstrates BMW's commitment to the UK and safeguards jobs for the future."

BMW has invested £1.75bn in Britain since 2000, including £500m last year, part of which went into the Swindon plant.

The investment was welcomed by Swindon North MP Justin Tomlinson, whose constituency includes the plant.

The CBI also welcomed the news, the latest in a string of investments in the UK motor industry. Head of enterprise & innovation policy Dr Tim Bradshaw said: "BMW's decision to invest in its UK plants re-affirms our position as one of Europe's leading locations for car production, and will have benefits for the wider automotive supply chain."

"Coming hot on the heels of other recent announcements, this new investment shows the UK automotive sector is in

## SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

### Forward Features . . .

For more information and to discuss advertising and editorial opportunities, please contact Anita Jaynes on 01793 615393 or email her at [anita@swindon-business.net](mailto:anita@swindon-business.net)

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Swindon Business News is the area's most-prestigious source of business news, features and information.

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## Melksham-based design firm invests £2m in purpose-built studio

Design company Superior Creative has invested £2m in a purpose-built design studio and in increasing its litho, digital and inkjet printing capacity – the latest move at the firm supported by Barclays.

The bank has backed the Melksham-based firm since it was acquired in a management buy-out and re-launched in 2005.

A team of finance experts at Barclays not only guided the firm through the crucial takeover but it has since continued to support Superior through numerous investment and expansion projects which has allowed the company to achieve strong growth despite the harsh economic climate.

Since 2005 Superior has created jobs and landed lucrative contracts, taking its turnover from £8.5m to more than £15m. Staffing levels have increased by 30 per cent in the past two years alone and it now employs more than 130 people across its operation, including a team of 45

account handlers, designers and artwork specialists in its creative section.

Managing director Ian O'Connor has worked closely with Barclays relationship director in Bristol Philip Walker on all the acquisitions, fundraising exercises, disposals and strategic reviews since the management buy-outs. Ian says Philip has been invaluable to Superior.

"Barclays has helped us every step of the way with revised business models," said Ian. "We have a longstanding and strong relationship with Barclays Corporate that they are prepared to lend funds to support Superior's continued growth and expansion plans."

Over the seven years, Barclays has helped Superior raise £5.5m for investment through mortgage and loans.

The firm is the sole supplier of printed marketing materials in the UK for leading beer and cider brewer Heineken and also provides a full

range of marketing services from 'blue-sky' design concepts to point-of-sale and brand management for blue-chip clients such as John Lewis, Booker Wholesale, Noble Foods, Premier Retail Group and Molton Brown.

It also provides support for e-marketing campaigns and has litho and digital printing capacity for projects across all sizes and media. Superior's storage warehouse has a bespoke packaging and delivery service and the company has introduced a dedicated in-house direct-mail facility for its clients. Philip Walker said: "Our sector focus and thorough understanding of the industry and market has enabled us to structure banking solutions that fits well with Superior's strategic plans."

"We're proud to be Superior's trusted banking partner and look forward to supporting the company's future growth plans. This demonstrates our appetite for providing funding solutions to quality businesses in the region."

## Why tribunals may not be the correct answer

*Conflict Masters, the Wiltshire consultancy that helps organisations tackle conflict in the workplace, continues its series of articles by director Sarah Crayford Brown. This month she looks at why an Employment Tribunal may not be the answer.*

There were some shocking figures out last month which showed that the number of outstanding Employment Tribunal cases has almost quadrupled in the past four years to a staggering 530,400 cases.

The research also found that for a number of cases it was taking more than three years to reach a decision.

The law firm EMW, which carried out the research, warned that the system was at breaking point and highlighted the pressure such delays are causing some companies.

What I found particularly interesting was a comment made by a tribunal panel member who said that one of the biggest challenges in reducing the backlog is that so many cases are settled on the day of the hearing.

Why do individuals and organisations put themselves through so much cost, preparation and stress but then settle on the day?

There are often two key psychological dilemmas at work. Firstly, one or both parties often 'want their day in court', which equates in their mind to a belief that the judge will hear their case, understand it, accept that they are right and the other party will be made to accept it.

They may also expect a substantial award of damages to be made to press home the point. Put another way, they want to feel truly heard and have their feelings of hurt and loss validated.

The second psychological feature at play is whether the parties involved are 'risk takers' or 'loss adverse'. The risk taker often believes they will lose but is prepared to gamble on the off chance of winning. Someone who is



Sarah Crayford Brown

loss adverse doesn't want to run the risk of losing so is happy to settle. Put another way, the risk taker believes that court is the best option while the party who is loss adverse doesn't want to go to court at all.

They may be building a case against each other without acknowledging or understanding what each is feeling or really wants to achieve.

In practice, the door of the court often provides the incentive and clarity of thought which moves the parties from their positions to reach a settlement.

However, it is unlikely that the parties will feel that a win/win has been achieved after settling at this late stage and are likely to be left highly frustrated by the process.

Is there another way? The Government believes there is and is running a 12-month pilot in Manchester and Cambridge offering mediation to SMEs to sort out workplace disputes and divert them from an Employment Tribunal.

Once evaluated, it is anticipated this will become available in all areas.

For more information go to [www.conflictmasters.co.uk](http://www.conflictmasters.co.uk) or call Sarah on 01249 859417

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# Solar farm raises more than £2m

Westmill Solar Cooperative, the UK's largest cooperatively-owned solar farm, has raised more than £2m from investors less than a month after it opened its unique share offer.

As reported in last month's Swindon Business News, the farm at Watchfield, near Swindon, is offering the chance for ethical investors to buy into the project.

The directors are seeking to raise equity of up to £4m to turn the existing solar farm, which opened more than a year ago, into one that's cooperatively owned.

The farm boasts more than 21,000 polycrystalline solar panels on a 30-acre site. The 4.8Gwh it is capable of producing would be sufficient to power 1,400 homes.

Adam Twine, a green energy pioneer and one of the directors of Westmill Solar Cooperative, said almost 10 per cent of investments so far had been made on behalf of children or grandchildren – "showing a belief that the share offer is a sound choice for future generations", he said.

"This is amazing news – people are embracing the project wholeheartedly. Whether they are investing £250 or £20,000 – all have seen Westmill Solar Cooperative as a practical and worthwhile investment.

"With predicted average annual, index-linked returns of 11 per cent for the 24-year period, it's clearly seen as an ethical alternative to the more traditional bank-based schemes."

Government minister and Wantage MP Ed Vaizey launched the



Westmill Solar Cooperative's solar farm in Watchfield

share offer last month.

Mr Twine and his co-directors, who include the founder of Low Carbon Solar UK Mark Shorrock, hope the solar farm share offer will replicate the success of Westmill Wind Farm, which has been operating on the same site for the past five years. It has around 2,400 members who invested an average of £1,800.

Because the solar farm was in operation before August 1 last year it qualifies for the highest level of Feed-in Tariff from the Government under a contract which runs for a further 24 years. The farm was built by UK solar specialists Blue Energy, who will be paid back by the cooperative via a bond raised through the City.

One of the early investors in the cooperative – taking the maximum holding of £20,000 – is 54-year-old Sue Roberts, who lives in Wallingford, Oxfordshire.

She said: "I have invested in the rock-solid banking sector in the past and look what's happened? For me this is a solid investment with guaranteed healthy returns.

"Just consider that for a moment. Where else will you get such a return? I've also advised my children to invest too – and after considering it carefully they've taken my advice.

"For me it's also ethically sound. Planet change is real, it's been scientifically proven, and our energy security will in the future become more and more compromised. It's important that we get to grips with clean energy."

# Green electricity supplier Good Energy targets its shares at AIM

Good Energy, the Chippenham-based green electricity supplier, is to list its share on the London Stock Exchange's AIM market following eight years on the lightly-regulated PLUS market.

The firm, the UK's leading 100 per cent renewable electricity supplier, said trading in its shares and interest from institutional shareholders had been low on PLUS and directors now believe it is an appropriate time to seek admission to AIM.

The move is part of the group's continued development with the board believing the increasing

need to seek access to institutional investors to help continue this growth.

"The directors also believe that admission to AIM will improve liquidity in the group's ordinary shares and enhance the status of the company's brand and market recognition," Good Energy said in a statement.

The firm, led by chief executive Juliet Davenport, last month announced it had passed the milestone of 30,000 electricity supply customers – an annual growth rate of 12 per cent – with more than 6,700 gas supply customers (up 47 per cent on the previous year).

Swindon Business News is going green in August with a special edition highlighting how local firms can benefit by embracing a more sustainable approach to business.

This unique edition will also showcase local businesses that are leading the way with environmentally-friendly products and services.

Swindon Business New's green special will highlight news of the latest innovations in green motoring and sustainable buildings, low-carbon transport and clean technology, offering for the first time a comprehensive overview of the Swindon area's position in this fast-growing sector.

To be involved in this high-profile edition of Swindon Business News either through editorial or advertising call 01793 615393 or email: [info@swindon-business.net](mailto:info@swindon-business.net)

# Office market shows

By Daniel Smethurst, partner, Whitmarsh Lockhart

Office take up in Swindon during 2011 totalled just 85,000 sq ft and, when compared to a five-year average of around 200,000 sq ft, this further highlights the impact of current economic conditions.

This year looks set to be better and we have seen a return of corporate activity which has already resulted in some sizable transactions and in some instances expansion. Take up currently stands at just over 75,000 sq ft, but with an estimated 60-70,000 sq ft in solicitors' hands and with two or three speculative requirements in the marketplace, 2012 office take up in the town could get somewhere close to the five-year running average. The market remains difficult to predict, however, and is defined by peaks and troughs in terms of activity.

While the bulk of office transactions have been out of town, it is encouraging to see a marked improvement in town centre activity, primarily driven by the rail and training industry. Town centre take up currently accounts for approximately 20 per cent of the total transactions in Swindon this year to date. Location is still key to attracting occupiers, with the bulk of activity taking place near the railway station. More recently the owners of Station Square have concluded a 4,000 sq ft letting and Mapeley's decision to invest in SN1 means a single floor plate

The out-of-town office market is more evenly poised with Delta Business Park seeing a resurgence in interest with lettings to TM Group and OATS totalling more than 15,000 sq ft and a further 7,000 sq ft in solicitors' hands.

At Kembrey Park, Highcross is reportedly in advanced discussions with a corporate occupier looking to take Rowan, the 27,000 sq ft stand-alone office building which has not been occupied since the National Trust vacated in 2005.



Daniel Smethurst

All these transactions highlight the role that refurbished office accommodation has to play in the overall context of the Swindon office market.

There is currently no speculative office space under construction in Swindon, with only an estimated 55,000 sq ft of Grade A office accommodation available out of town.

While there are sites allocated for future office development, it is highly unlikely that this will be speculatively built out. Having regard to recent improvements in corporate activity in the town, Swindon may well witness a shortage of Grade A office accommodation over the coming years. Such constraints are likely to result in



(10,000 sq ft) is in solicitors' hands, with further interest being shown in a couple of other suites.

Minton Place has also proved popular as a destination with 5,000 sq ft of office space transacted this year, taking the building near to full occupancy.

the refurbishment of older buildings in order to satisfy demand, although the prospect of up front capital expenditure for such projects in a volatile market will give rise to some difficult decisions along the way.

Despite what can best be described as a market of peaks and troughs,



Kingston House

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# wing signs of improvement



commencing works on their respective projects – Union Square and Regent Circus – which will mark the redevelopment of the former police station site and the demolition and redevelopment of the old Swindon College site. These are huge achievements in the current economic climate and will hopefully provide the town with some positive publicity over the coming months.

To conclude, headline rents on Swindon's premier business park destinations which are often perceived as a barometer for the town have held up well despite the fragility of market conditions. Landlords have adopted a more pragmatic approach when dealing with occupier requirements and while there is still a gap to bridge in terms of landlord and tenant expectations, commercial transactions are taking place.

In a world where the bottom line and efficiency is playing a greater role in the decision-making process, Swindon remains well positioned to service occupier requirements. The town continues to attract and, more importantly, retain high-profile occupiers due to its location and competitive rental levels. While recovery is expected to be slow and protracted, the town's office market is at least showing some resilience to current economic conditions.

Swindon does have the benefit of some major projects taking place which should ensure that it is well positioned to vie for future M4 corridor opportunities.

The electrification of the mainline railway between Paddington and Cardiff will reportedly cut journey times from Bristol to London Paddington by as much as 20 minutes. The knock-on effect of this could well be a journey time from Swindon to

Paddington in approximately 45 minutes. The ramifications of this could be far reaching in so far as Swindon has always proved popular as a gateway to servicing the South West and such improvements should only contribute to its appeal.

More recently we have witnessed a couple of milestones which will hopefully start to alter the landscape of the town centre. Developers MUSE and Ashfield Land are both on site and

## Capita Symonds uses Swindon deal to seek more collaborations in West

Capita Symonds is building on the success of its strategic partnership with Swindon Borough Council by seeking further collaborations across the South West.

The firm describes its 15-year partnership with the council, which it signed in February 2007, as 'groundbreaking'.

It hopes to replicate the successful model, and a similar partnership in Southampton, in other areas through the provision of a wide range of property and infrastructure services.

Its Swindon and Southampton offices have resulted in more than 500 staff transferring to Capita Symonds and providing services back to the local authority and private sector clients across the region and further afield.

In Swindon more than 35 professional technical staff provide a wide range of multi-disciplinary services including

architecture, building surveying, building services, engineering M&E, health and safety compliance, CDM coordination, facilities and property management.

One of the key successes of the partnership in its formative years was an accelerated programme of works that was designed and implemented for the council. Extended Property Services saved the council more than £6m in its first three years.

The partnership with Swindon Council also involves services provided by an architecture team in Cwmbran, South Wales, and a building surveying/building services team in Bristol.

Nationally, Capita Symonds provides a broad range of professional services covering design, engineering, construction, infrastructure and property markets. With more than 3,900 staff in 60-plus offices across the

UK and internationally with a turnover of in excess of £220m, it is one of the UK's largest multidisciplinary consultancies with a comprehensive and diverse project portfolio.

It is also one of the UK's top three project and cost management consultants, having delivered projects with a capital cost in excess of £5bn and project manages more than £1bn of construction projects a year.

A spokesman said: "Our clients benefit from the levels of service of smaller providers while gaining access to the resources and expertise of one of the largest and most dynamic property consultancies. At the core of all Capita Symonds' activities is our passion for delivering service excellence. Deep commitment and constant energy combined with extensive expertise and innovation enable us to deliver what we promise."

## Pluss adds to its office in Swindon

Pluss, the social enterprise that helps people with disabilities find work, has expanded its Swindon town centre office in a deal secured by agents Whitmarsh Lockhart,

Pluss opened the office in the recently-refurbished Curtis Court building earlier this year and has now taken an additional 700 sq ft, increasing its total occupancy to 2,200 sq ft.

Refurbishment work throughout the 16,471 sq ft building by Hopkins Developments, assisted by Preece & Co, has enabled the agents to offer flexible accommodation finished to a high order.

Daniel Smethurst of Whitmarsh Lockhart said: "Curtis Court is a substantial office property on the corner of Curtis Street, Milton Road and Commercial Road which was previously occupied by NatWest Bank.

"The refurbishment included the common parts and the creation of a new reception area.

"It is particularly pleasing in the current economic climate to see an existing occupier going from strength to strength and further highlights the importance of good



landlord and tenant relationships."

Whitmarsh Lockhart is jointly instructed with Loveday to market the remaining office accommodation which is capable of catering for requirements from 700 sq ft upwards.

## Windmill Hill 'obvious choice' for businesses



The Stella building at Windmill Hill

Windmill Hill Business Park has established itself not only as Swindon's prime office location but one of the premier business parks on the M4 corridor.

The park boasts 670,000 sq ft of quality office space and, when complete, will be a 1m sq ft business community.

The park, developed by property giants St Martins over the past 20 years, has long been a magnet for blue-chip businesses, among them RWE npower, Arval, Capgemini, Nationwide building society and serviced office group Regus.

The most recent buildings on the park, Pegasus and Stella, form part of its seventh phase and act as prominent landmarks at the gateway to Windmill Hill.

Stella represents a rare opportunity for small and large occupiers to acquire space in a prestigious headquarters building. It has attracted Handelsbanken, Isotron, Robert Half and RBS as occupiers and is now 95 per cent full.

Patent and trade mark attorney firm Phillips & Leigh has found the Regus serviced office at Windmill Hill an ideal location since opening a satellite office there.

Founded in 1882, the firm is one of the longest-established businesses of its kind in London and when it needed to open a second office to serve a growing number of clients along the M4 corridor, Windmill Hill

was an obvious choice.

"Our clients are important to us and we pride ourselves in providing outstanding excellence in intellectual property services both within the UK and Internationally in the fields of patents, trade marks, designs, due diligence, copyright, domain name registration and conflict resolution," said a spokesman. "We understand that protecting ideas can be make or break for an enterprise and we provide expert services tailored to our clients' needs and financial circumstances.

"Whether they are someone with a great idea or a multi-national company with a large integrated IP portfolio, our highly experienced attorneys can provide services tailored to their requirements utilising our wide variety of technological disciplines.

"We are proud of our ability to quickly become conversant with our clients' technologies, as part of the process of obtaining patent protection."

Anyone with a great idea, a new company name, or who wants to talk over what protection might be available for their intellectual property, should get in touch to arrange a consultation.

"We look forward to hearing about ideas for the future and we hope to help make those dreams a reality," said the spokesman.

Contact Phillips & Leigh on 01793 441445 or at mail@pandl.com.

**Windmill Hill is strategically located less than one mile from Junction 16 of the M4 motorway, the UK's principal commercial axis.**

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## Redevelopment plans being drawn up for prime Chippenham sites

Plans for the biggest redevelopment project for generations in Chippenham – including the town's massive former Westinghouse site – are being drawn up following an agreement between two development companies.

Property management and development companies Aberdeen Property UK Retail Parks Trust and Ashtenne Industrial Fund have formed the partnership to redevelop a 54-acre site that takes in Langley Park, once home to the giant Westinghouse industrial complex and now the base for a number of factories and offices, along with Hathaway Retail Park.

The partnership was formed when Chippenham Vision

and Wiltshire Council, acting as the local planning authority, asked Ashtenne to create a strategy for the site – one of the largest redevelopment areas along the M4 corridor. The site fronts onto the main London-Bristol railway line close to Chippenham station.

Aberdeen Asset Management director Simon Moscow said: "There are a lot of good businesses in both Hathaway Park and Langley Park, all of which have huge potential."

Ashtenne director Wayne Locke added: "We will unlock one of Chippenham's most significant private sector-led investments over the next 18 months to two years. Once delivered, this will undoubtedly act as a magnet for future investment in the town."

## Three office lettings at Minton Place

Three office lettings totalling 4,900 sq ft at Minton Place in central Swindon have been concluded by agents Whitmarsh Lockhart acting on behalf of owner Aberdeen Property Investors UK.

Optical Express and First Great Western have taken new lease agreements while TBG Learning, one of the UK's leading providers of youth and adult learning programmes, has expanded into additional space.

The lettings take the four-storey building in Station Road almost to full occupancy – just one remaining suite of 1,032 sq ft remains available.

Daniel Smethurst of Whitmarsh Lockhart said: "Minton Place occupies a prime central location within Swindon's main central business district and the very fact that it is within walking distance of the railway station certainly appeals to the marketplace. It is always good to see both existing and new organisations taking additional space in the town, especially in the current economic climate and we wish them every success with their operations."

"The accommodation benefits from open plan layouts, raised access flooring, air conditioning, together with a concierge."

Other Minton Place tenants include property management consultants Workman and railway engineers Amey.



Minton Place

## Recruitment firm relocates Calne office

Recruitment firm CMD has relocated its Calne office to the Four Brooks Business Centre in a deal arranged by property agents Keningtons.

The firm, which also has offices in Chippenham and Devizes, has room to grow at the new base on the first floor of Unit 5 at the centre, on the town's Portemarth Industrial Estate. It previously operated from serviced offices elsewhere on the estate.

Dan Barfoot of CMD said: "The units at Four Brooks were being marketed by Keningtons with the strap line Let's Talk Your Terms."

"We took the opportunity and talked sensible terms which were acceptable to both parties. We are very pleased with the new accommodation which will now allow for the growth of our business."

The firm has taken the office on a

new five-year lease with tenant's break. Keningtons acted for landlords for Checkmore and Denton & Gibson.

Jeremy Sutton at Keningtons added: "The marketing campaign for Four Brooks continues to invite potential tenants to talk to us about their requirements and where possible the landlords will try and accommodate tenant's requirements and terms."

## Swindon's shop rents fall fastest, says agent

Shop rents have fallen faster in Swindon than any other town in the South West, according to research by retail analysts at property consultants Colliers International.

While rents decreased in 14 of the 36 towns in the region analysed by Colliers, those in Swindon slumped by 29 per cent. Rental levels rose in just two of the towns.

Colliers retail director Richard Saunders said Swindon had been hit by "challenging market conditions in the town which is further illustrated by the town's main shopping mall, The Brunel Centre, going into receivership in December 2011."

He added: "Hopefully Swindon has now found its level which will be affordable to retailers considering the town against other locations and to build on the success of the redevelopment of Bhs on The Parade – which includes River Island and Topshop."

In stark contrast, shop rents rose by 45.5 per cent in the Somerset cathedral city of Wells.

"This success is underpinned by its catchment area of wealthy locals and a strong tourist industry," added Mr Saunders.

"Wells is an example of a previously tight town with limited availability. Retailers wanting representation in the city end up in competition with each other – which in turn drives up rents."

Nationally, retail capital values grew by just 1.3 per cent in 2011 with shopping centres the weakest performer (falling by 0.3 per cent) and supermarkets the strongest (increasing by a modest 2.5 per cent).

In the year end to April 2012, capital values fell across the retail sector by 1.5 per cent. Shopping centre values fell the most (down 3.3 per cent) followed by standard shops (down 2.3 per cent). Supermarket values fell the least.

Colliers' Midsummer Retail Review shows that supermarkets continue to lead in the new financial year and are forecast to be the only retail assets with positive capital value growth – a modest 1.7 per cent.

In contrast, shopping centres continue to underperform with capital values falling by 9.9 per cent.

## Fashion retailer set to open Marlborough store

Fast-growing women's luxury fashion retailer Mint Velvet is to open a store in Marlborough. The national chain, which has around 70 shops across the UK, is to occupy a retail unit on the High Street which has recently been refurbished and extended by the landlord to provide 1,621 sq ft of sales space on the ground and lower ground floors.

Swindon property agents Kilpatrick & Co let the shop, between Viyella and Waitrose, on behalf of a private investment company.

Andrew Kilpatrick of Kilpatrick & Co said: "I hope Mint Velvet will prove to be a very successful tenant and trade well in Marlborough."

"When it opens, the shop will lie between Viyella and Jigsaw to create a peak of ladies' fashionwear retailers in Marlborough High Street."

Mint Velvet was represented by Jones Lang LaSalle.

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# Limited edition Jazz Si released

Honda has released a limited edition version of its Swindon-built Jazz supermini. The Jazz Si is a special new variant combining the space, versatility and frugal running costs of the Jazz range with sporty looks, revised suspension and additional racy features.

To launch the car, Honda is offering the Jazz Si with highly-competitive finance offers such as three years zero per cent PCP with payments of £149 a month with a 27 per cent deposit. The on-the-road price for the Jazz Si is £14,550.

Built in Honda's manufacturing facility in Swindon alongside the rest of the Jazz range, the Si is based on the 1.4 ES manual variant, but with additional sports-inspired features. The exterior has been given front and rear sport bumpers and side skirts, as well as 16-inch alloys. The Si also has the addition of privacy glass, front fog lights and Si branding on the boot, to highlight the car's sportier specification.

To ensure the Jazz Si has substance as well as style, revised suspension settings have been adopted. New dampers are combined



The Swindon-built Jazz Si

with a larger front anti-roll bar to improve straight-line stability and body control. The electric power-steering system has also been modified for improved feel and response.

Along with greater dynamism, the Jazz Si retains the easy-to-drive character, smooth controls, comfortable ride and long-distance refinement of the standard Jazz. The Jazz Si therefore offers the best of all worlds – a small car that can effortlessly cover long distances and

is also fun to drive.

The interior has been given the Si treatment too, with a leather-trimmed steering wheel, black and silver supportive seats and the benefit of cruise control. The Jazz Si is available in four colours, to highlight the cars more youthful look; Milano Red, Crystal Black, White Orchid and Azure Blue.

A Si-T version is also available for £15,545 (OTR) and benefits from the addition of SD navigation and integrated Bluetooth.

# Littlewick Green Motor Company appointed as SsangYong dealer

Swindon's Littlewick Green Motor Company has been appointed as a dealer for Korean-built SsangYong cars.

The dealership, opened earlier this month at Kennedy Drive, Eldene, by a long-established, family owned Maidenhead motor trade business, also sells Chinese marques Great Wall and DFSK.

Welcoming the company to the network, SsangYong Motor UK chief executive Paul Williams said: "We and our dealers are focused on giving customers great service, so whether buying a new or used SsangYong, choosing accessories or helping to maintain their car in the years ahead, we are confident customers will appreciate the car, their dealer and the brand."

Littlewick Green is now selling the SsangYong Korando, which has been designed in Italy by Giorgetto Giugiaro of Ital Design, for the

European market. The Korando is powered by a Euro 5 2.0-litre diesel engine and is available in two-wheel drive or four-wheel drive options.

A spokesman said: "Korando offers the practicality of a 4x4/SUV, the accessibility of a family hatchback, and the capability to go from muddy campsite to urban school run."

There are six models available, with the option of 6 speed manual, 6 speed automatic and a choice of trim levels - S, SX, ES and EX.

Prices start from £16,995.

Dealer principal of Littlewick Green Motor Company Ian Govier, added: "We are delighted to have been appointed to represent SsangYong, and greatly look forward to playing our part in its success."

"The Korando is a great car, and with a very competitive price and five-year limitless warranty, we believe it will do extremely well in our area, and have every confidence in its success."

"We are so confident that we have also taken on SsangYong after sales at our head office, Littlewick Green Service Station in Maidenhead, and are building a purpose built showroom for SsangYong sales. This should be completed by the end of 2012."

"We would also like to welcome Paul Burrows as our new general sales manager for Swindon, who has many years experience in the area."

During its 50-plus years in business, Littlewick Green Motor Company has represented Opel, Toyota, Datsun, Daihatsu and Mazda (as an authorised repairer) and now represents Honda, Suzuki, Great Wall, DFSK and SsangYong.

Until 1994 it owned and operated eight sites in and around Maidenhead. These were sold in 1994 but bought back in 2000. The smaller sites were disposed of and the core business was retained to become the present company.



# DAB upgrade offered to Skurrays customers

Skurrays Vauxhall in Swindon is looking to the future of in-car radios by offering all its customers the option to upgrade their AM/FM radio to new digital radio technology with Vauxhall's high-quality, fully-integrated DAB upgrade kit.

While a number of new Vauxhall models are available with DAB as standard, there are still many new and used vehicles not equipped for the digital radio switchover.

Skurrays Vauxhall is inviting motorists to the site in Hillmead to get ahead of the game and have their radio switched on to digital for exclusive sporting event coverage this summer and superior quality of sound on national and local digital channels.

Skurrays Vauxhall managing director Nick Plevy said: "We are pleased to consistently offer our customers the most up-to-date and forward-thinking technology when it comes to the products and accessories available in the Vauxhall range and our DAB upgrade kit is no exception."

"We would like to invite anyone who is after an upgrade on their existing AM/FM radio system to visit us and speak to our experienced technicians who will be happy to fit the new system for you."

Technicians at Skurrays Vauxhall will check the signal in customer's local area to make sure the DAB radio is the best option for them and can fit the new system for only £195 RRP in less than an hour.

The system upgrades the OE radio to receive DAB as well as the existing AM/FM/LW channels. It is fitted behind the radio and utilises the steering wheel controls and vehicle display. The only visual sign of the system is the digital film ariel, which is fitted in the top left hand corner of the windscreen, and the data showing on the vehicle display.

Owners of a new Vauxhall car will receive lifetime warranty for their DAB system, in line with the warranty on their vehicle. Meanwhile drivers of used vehicles will receive a three-year warranty for their new DAB upgrade.

# Fleet sales investment pays off for Pebley Beach

Following investment in a new fleet sales structure and the launch of the new i40 range and the new generation i30, Pebley Beach and Hyundai UK have seen a dramatic uplift in fleet sales this year to date against a market that is down 0.12 per cent.

So far this year 17,998 vehicles have been registered, which represents an increase of 41.75 per cent and a 3.35 per cent market share.

This growth has been driven by a fresh product line-up and in particular by the new i20 and the new generation i30 which have both increased market share in their respective segments. The popular i800 also delivered its highest ever volume with 367 registrations in June. The best-selling model so far this year is the award-winning i10 with 11,363 sold, up 14.1 per cent versus 2011.

Tony Whitehorn, Hyundai UK president and CEO, said: "We have had an exceptional first half to 2012 driven primarily by new product. Consumers are choosing Hyundai in increasing numbers which is a real sign of the growing relevance of our brand."

"The new i20, i40 and the new generation i30 have really raised the bar – offering style, refinement, efficiency and practicality. That combined with the peace of mind offered by our Five-Year Triple Care package, which includes a five year fully-transferable and unlimited mileage warranty, has ensured that we are really competitive in the market place."

Pebley Beach Hyundai can be found on West Swindon Motor Park, SN5 7SB. [www.pebley.co.uk](http://www.pebley.co.uk)

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## Winners announced in our first PA Awards

Lucille Barnes, personal assistant to Swindon law firm Thrings managing partner Thomas Sheppard, was this afternoon named as the first winner of the South West PA of the Year award, staged by Swindon Business News.

Lucille received the prestigious award at a ceremony hosted by luxury Ston Easton Park Hotel, near Shepton Mallet.

The Newcomer of the Year category was won by Ruth McKibbin of Bath children's charity Quarriers and the Best Event Organised by a PA award went to Lorraine Taylor of Bristol law firm DAC Beachcroft.

The PA Awards – the first of their kind in the region – were launched earlier this year by Swindon Business News and its sister websites Bath Business News and Bristol Business News, to champion the region's top PAs.

Competition was fierce with bosses from a wide range of businesses and public sector organisations nominating their PAs.

Collecting her Bristol Blue Glass engraved trophy from judge Peaches Golding, Lucille said she was shocked but delighted to win.

"This is for all PAs," she said. "I really wasn't expecting this. I just do my job. But it's great to win."

In his nomination, Mr Sheppard said: "As my PA, Luci is always several steps ahead of what is happening. My job involves me in multi-



Lucille Barnes and Thomas Sheppard

attendee meetings across our four offices and elsewhere on most working days. All my travel, accommodation, expenses, biographies of those attending and relevant meeting documents are always prepared and available sometimes months ahead to get best value for the firm and to allow me to be as focused as possible on my work.

"We work in different offices and yet Luci manages all my incoming post, emails and telephone calls and makes sure they are promptly



Lorraine Taylor



Ruth McKibbin

and correctly understood and if possible resolved long before I become engaged. My meetings are planned well in advance and great thought is given by Luci to make this hectic pattern of work as manageable and achievable as possible. There is always a prioritised list of decisions and "nags" tailored to what I can achieve and managed when I cannot."

Lucille received a range of prizes, including two tickets to Ballet in the Park at Ston Easton plus a gourmet dinner for two as well as the unique Bristol Blue Glass trophy.

The awards were presented following a champagne tea at Ston Easton Park.

Swindon Business News assembled a top team of judges for these awards including: Peaches Golding, former High Sheriff of Bristol

and principal consultant at Moon Consulting executive recruitment & business consulting; Angela MacAusland of PA firm AMPMPA; Dawn Carey, Executive Personal Assistant at National Friendly and Hayes PA of the Year winner 2010; Linda Williams, sales manager at Ston Easton Park Hotel and Anita Jaynes, Swindon Business News business development manager

**The full list of prizes were:**

\* (donated by Ston Easton Park) Champagne and roses, two tickets to the Ballet in the Park at the hotel with Covent Garden Dance Company including a champagne dinner, full vintage-style afternoon tea for four, and Sunday Luncheon for two in the hotel's Sorrel Restaurant

• (donated by Thermae Bath Spa) A three-hour evening spa session for two people, including complimentary use of towel, robe & slippers for two and two one-course meals from the Twilight menu, with two complementary glasses of house wine, beer or soft drinks.

• Two tickets to a meeting at Bath Racecourse  
• Free cocktails and canapés at Circo Bar, Bath  
• Two tickets to see Hysteria at the Ustinov Theatre, Bath

• A spa day for two at The Royal Crescent Hotel's Bath House

• Business dress consultation with Suit the City  
• Voice/telephony training by Joanne Crosse at MetaMedia.



## Louise qualifies for Games

Swindon tennis ace Louise Hunt has qualified for the London Paralympics.

Louise, who was featured in Swindon Business News in March seeking a corporate sponsor, is now part of the 10-strong team which will represent Great Britain in the wheelchair tennis events at the Games.

Louise, from Wanborough, will be making her Games debut at the event and is one of a total of 112 players from 30 countries will compete for six gold medals.

She still hopes to secure a local business as a sponsor to help with the major cost of competing at the Games.

Louise, ranked at world number 18 and the UK's number three for ladies singles, has to find around £30,000 a year to fund her appearances in major tournaments and the 25 hours of training she takes part in a week at Bath University.

The 21 year old is seeking sponsorship to take her through the London Paralympics in September and prepare for the 2016 Games in Rio.



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# Swindon acts as test bed for Govt skills programme

Swindon firms employing 16 and 17 year olds may be affected by changes being piloted in the town as part of Government's far-reaching scheme to raise the age at which young people can leave learning.

The Raising the Participation Age (RPA) pilot will enable employers, young people, parents and carers, schools and colleges to understand what this may mean to them when it comes into force next year.

The 2008 Education and Skills Act increases the minimum age at which young people can leave learning. That means they must continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and until their 18th birthday from 2015. The Government believes the move will benefit young people, equipping them with the right skills for the modern

workplace, as well as boosting economy and wider society.

RPA does not mean young people must stay in school. They will be able to choose one of the following options:

- full-time education, such as school, college or home education
- work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship
- part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours a week.

RPA may affect businesses if they employ a 16 or 17 year old for 20 hours or more a week, and for eight or more weeks in a row.

From 2013 these businesses can either: provide training towards an accredited qualifications or check that the young person is enrolled in some part-time learning (which leads to accreditation) before they start work; and

# 18

Age at which young people will need to continue to learn

If needed, agree working hours that will allow the young person to attend the learning that they are enrolled in – but the business needs can be taken into account. In most cases, young people should be able to

attend training during hours that will not affect the business.

The Government says continuing in learning or training post-16 will help ensure young people develop the skills they need to succeed and progress in their education and careers – contributing to a more highly-trained and qualified workforce. This will benefit businesses, as the young people they employ will be developing the skills that matter to them and the business, as well as the country as a whole.

Studies have found that raising the proportion of workers trained in an industry by five per cent is associated with a four per cent increase in value added per worker, compared to a 1.6 per cent increase in wages.

RPA will not affect businesses if they employ a 16 or 17 year old for less than 20 hours a week or less than

eight weeks in a row. In fact, the RPA legislation won't affect most of the young people in employment, who in the main work in the evenings, on weekends or in the holiday periods, and then attend school or college full-time during the week.

Other factors for businesses

They will not be responsible for monitoring the young person's attendance at their part-time learning.

They don't have to pay for the training or the wages of the young person while they are not at work.

The young person's training should be at least 280 guided hours per year, but this can be taken flexibly to work around the business needs where possible.

The local authority in Swindon is committed to supporting you meet these requirements.

For further information go to <http://rpa.forwardswindon.co.uk/>

## Elm completes £3m job

Elm Workspace, the Calne-based office design, refurbishment, fit out and relocation specialist, has recently completed its largest-ever project – a £3m scheme at Watchmoor Park on the M3 corridor at Camberley, Surrey.

The firm believes the move demonstrates not only its ability to finance such a large project but also to project manage a fast-track and comprehensive fit out and furniture supply.

The building has 60,000 sq ft of office space over four floors which included gym, cafe, full professional kitchen, reception, comms rooms and full air-handling system.

After the main fit out, more than 350 workstations were installed and a comprehensive audio visual system complemented more than 30 meeting and quiet rooms all finished in full-height glass and

full-height glass doors. Elm Workspace, which has offices in Bristol, Oxford, Bournemouth, Oxford, Exeter and London and is to open in Birmingham soon, has also recently completed its latest academy project – this time in Cheltenham for All Saints Academy.

The school accommodates 1,300 11-16 year old students with a sixth form for 250 students.

The fitted furniture for the science rooms was a maple melamine finish with silver grey trespa tops and the loose furniture a striking selection of primary colours particularly in the shared spaces which were complemented with surrounding feature colour walls. Probably the most significant design statement was the copper-clad chapel that intersects all three floors to the roof section topped with a stained glass roof light.

## Local businesses take advantage of Fast Forward's free training offer

Swindon training company Fast Forward has secured funding to offer free training for those who have low levels of skills or qualifications.

Local businesses are taking advantage of this great opportunity to give their employees the much-needed business skills in customer services, retail, logistics and catering.

A 'pick and mix menu' of short, sharp courses has been designed, focusing on critical skills such as dealing with difficult customers, food safety, using email and emergency first

aid. Project manager Mary Scott said: "We're delighted because it means we can get training to the places where it will have the most impact. There are lots of organisations in Swindon and Wiltshire that employ people who haven't had the opportunity to get some really good, work-related training under their belts. It's this kind of training that can mean the difference between success and failure – not only for the employee but also the business, especially if it's small."

The funding, drawn from a

European bid in the South West, is designed to pay the full cost of training for staff who have no qualifications above Level 1 (anyone who has GCSEs below grade C or no O Levels).

Mary asks interested employers to call her immediately. "We only have a certain amount to spend, so it's critical that businesses get in touch as soon as possible. We don't want any of these vital funds to go unspent."

Contact 0808 178 3893 for more information.

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